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February 10, 2009

Senator Toni Harp, Co-Chair
Rep. Juan Candelaria, Co-Chair
Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Harp and Representative Candelaria:

I am writing this letter in support of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) in response to Governor M. Jodi Rell's proposal to eliminate this important statewide commission. In 1994, the CT State Legislature created LPRAC in order to reach out to, effectively represent and speak out for the Latino population that represents Connecticut's largest minority group.

Since 1995, the LPRAC has played a pivotal role in recommending legislation that has later been adopted into law, such as the creation of Individual Development Account (IDA) Programs and the restoration of voting rights. LPRAC also continues generating key data on issues ranging from HIV/AIDS, lead poisoning and asthma, and publishes the only comprehensive socio-economic study on the status of Latinos in Connecticut.

Furthermore, the LPRAC leverages its partnerships with lawmakers, federal and municipal elected officials, and national civil rights leaders to affect change on issues such as workplace discrimination, redistricting, human trafficking and immigration reform. They have advised and provided information to the Governor and the General Assembly on the state's policies concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican community. LPRAC has also provided guidance to the Governor and the General Assembly concerning the coordination and administration of state programs serving the Latino and Puerto Rican population.

In July 2008, LPRAC hosted a state-wide housing summit that drew representatives from the State Banking Commission, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, State Legislators, members of the Commission's Board in collaboration with SINA, and private foundations. This was an important opportunity to provide critical information to community based organizations and government agencies about how the foreclosure crisis has disproportionately affected Latinos in Connecticut and the resources available to assist homeowners.

Although LPRAC has made significant strides in its efforts, more work still needs to be done to help Latinos close the gaps that exist in obtaining high quality health care, better educational opportunities, access to affordable housing, and securing living wage jobs.

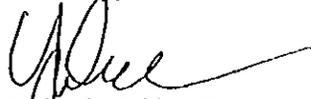
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We urge that Governor Rell and the Connecticut Legislature reconsider their decision to eliminate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission which is a critical resource and serves a vital purpose as one of the instruments the legislature and the Governor can seek out whenever it needs information on one of its large and growing constituencies in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Yolanda Caldera-Durant, M.S.
Program Director
Economic Opportunity & Health and Human Services

Cc: Representative Minnie Gonzalez